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CHURCH BELLS.

"How soft the music of those village bells,
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence sweet, now dying all away,
Now pealing loud again, and louder still,
Clear and sonorous, as the gale comes on!"

Who does not love to listen to the sound of a good peal of church bells? Whether they be the bells of the old parish church, whose chimes call the villagers to the holy services of God's house from the distant hill-sides and lonely valleys, and whose sound is carried even to the most distant hamlet, or whether they be the bells of the venerable cathedral pile, around whose walls memories crowd of long ages past and gone,—memories of joys and memories of sorrow,—battles fought and victories won, for which those bells have pealed forth their rejoicings. Then came the muffled knell, the solemn toll, which told of those who had gone to their rest; some leaving many behind them to mourn their vacant place, while others had passed away with no loved ones around to soothe and comfort their last moments in this weary world, and the only count which

the busy crowds took of their departure from amongst them was the passing bell and muffled peal.

How little any of us know about bells; only, perhaps, some of the older ones amongst us say that bells used to sound sweeter, that there were better ringers in the old days, and that the bells then were made with more silver in them.

This later reason, Denison (who is one of the rarest authorities on church bells) declares to be vulgar superstition. But every one is quite right when they say there are no bells like the old bells, but I hope, some day, the young new bells may be made more like the old ones, and then when our great-grandchildren sit and listen to their sweet notes, they will wonder, as we do now, at our old bells. What tales of the past those bells could tell them! But this will be in the ages to come, and in the mean time what can we learn about our own loved bells? and what histories can they tell us? Small bells were of ancient origin, and we read in Exodus of the bells and pomegranates worn on the high priest's dress; yet large bells, such as our own church bells, are never spoken of even among the Greeks and Romans. They are supposed to have been invented by Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, in Campania, about the year 400 A. D., whence the Nola and Campania of the lower Latinity. They were probably introduced into England soon after their invention, for Bede mentions them about the close of the seventh century.

Bells, both ancient and modern, have been applied to sacred purposes. There has been much controversy as to what the ancients called bells, for they have been called by both ancients and moderns by a great variety of names, viz: Petasus, Codon, Nola, Cloca, &c.

The Greeks had bells, for at Athens the priest of Proserpine used a bell to call the people to sacrifice; but it is not possible to discover when bells were first used in Christian churches. In the East, the people were informed of the hour of divine service by means of a rattle or beating on wooden boards with a hammer, and this custom was long retained. An old author tells us that the signal for divine worship was given by a trumpet, and Innocentius Ansaldo is of opinion, that all signals of hours were given by trumpets amongst the ancients, and bells were not introduced into churches until the sixth century. Bede first mentions them 680 A. D., and, certainly, after that period they became common and were often made the subject of pious donations, both here and on the Continent.

In the history of Ingulphus, we read of Turketulus, Abbot of Croyland, who died 975. He caused a large bell to be made and presented to his abbey. It was called Guthlac. His successor, Egebricus, caused two large bells to be made called Bartholomew and Bettelmus; also two of a middle size named Turketulus and Taturims, and two small bells called Pega and Bega. When the bell Guthlac was hung along with these, Ingulphus affirms that such wonderful harmony was produced, that there was no ringing in all England to equal it.

Pope John XIII., A. D. 968, consecrated a very large new bell in the Lantern Church, and gave it the name of John. In the Roman Pontificale is a service for the baptizing of bells; and Sir Henry Spelman, in his "Glossary," v. Campana, has preserved two monkish lines on the subject of the ancient offices of bells—

"Laudo Deum verum, plebem voco, congrego clerum,
Dufunctos ploro, pestem fugo, festa decoro."

Brand quotes other monkish rhymes, which enumerate no less than sixteen purposes to which bells are or may be applied.

The Couvre-feu or Curfew Bell, was rung every night, and is supposed to have been introduced by William I. as a badge of servitude upon the English; but the custom prevailed on the Continent long before his time, and was intended as a precaution against fires, which were very frequent and destructive, as all the houses were then built of wood. Henry I. is said to have restored the use of lamps and candles at court in the night after the ringing of the curfew, which had been prohibited by his predecessors. At Barking, in Essex, is still a tower which bears the name of fire-bell or curfew, and in many parts of England, the custom of ringing the curfew bell has been only discontinued within the memory of many living now. In Longfellow's "Evangeline," we read of the curfew bell—

"Anon the bell from the belfry
Rang out the hour of nine, the village curfew and straight-
way
Rose the guests and departed, and silence reigned in the
household."

The Passing Bell was so named because it was tolled when any one passed from this life. Hence it was sometimes called the Soul Bell, and was rung that those that heard it might pray for the soul of the dying person. The number of times of tolling depended upon the rank of the person. It is specially mentioned in the account of the last moments of Lady Katherine Grey, who died a prisoner in the Tower, in 1567. The tolling of the "Passing Bell" continued as late as Charles II.'s time. In olden times bells were used for many superstitious purposes. The custom of the funeral knell first arose in the darkest ages, as did also the custom of the Passing Bell. The most ancient bells and cymbals are supposed to have been made of brass, and a special virtue was conceived to lie in that metal. The knives used in the ancient sacrifices were always made of brass. It entered into the composition of the sacred utensils in the temples; the sound of it was supposed to put demons to flight, and witches used it in their incantations. So, perhaps, we may suppose, that the ringing of bells for dying persons was connected with the reputed virtue of brass.

The ringing of bells was supposed to drive away all the evil spirits which might assail the dying person. Every one, therefore, who could in his dying moments afford to pay the

large sum of money required, had the largest bell rung for his soul, as it was supposed that the greater the noise the more effectual would be the ringing of the bell. For if the superstition of our ancestors did not go so far as to believe in the virtue of brass, they certainly thought that the mere noise was sufficient to drive away the evil spirits, which they believed were always hovering round the dying to make a prey of their souls. The tolling of the bell was supposed to strike them with terror. From this superstition arose the tolling of bells at funerals; the bells being muffled for the sake of the greater solemnity. Bells were constantly rung during eclipses, and supposed to put all demons to flight. In Italy, the custom prevailed to a much later date, and during great tempests the women assembled, ringing bells and beating cymbals.

Now the Passing Bell is no longer rung, but the morning after the death of any person, the bell is tolled at eight o'clock, and at the end of the tolling (in Yorkshire and Dorsetshire, and probably elsewhere), nine knells are tolled for a man, six for a woman, and three for a child. In Somersetshire, three knells are tolled for a man and only two for a woman.

The Sanctus, or Saint's Bell, was thus called because rung when the priest came to the words of the mass "Sancte, sancte, sancte, Deus Sabaoth," that all persons who were absent might fall on their knees in reverence of the holy office going on in the churches. It was usually a small bell rung by hand, similar to those still in use in the Roman Catholic churches, but it was frequently placed where it might be heard farthest; in a lantern at the springing of the steeple, or in a turret at the angle of the tower, or for the convenience of being more easily rung, within a cote or turret between the church and the chancel, the rope in this situation falling down into the choir not far from the altar. Several of these turrets, and some with the bells in them, are still seen in our country churches, and in several churches in Somersetshire, the Sanctus Bell is still rung at the commencement of the service.

It is said that among the Greeks, bells began to be disused after the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, as the latter forbade the use of bells lest their sound should disturb the repose of souls. At Bordeaux, also, we hear of the people being deprived of their bells on account of rebellion, and when offered them again, they refused to have them, having learnt the ease and convenience of being freed "from the constant din and jangling of bells."

The largest bells in the world are generally stationary bells, used only for clocks to strike upon, or at the most are occasionally swung frame high, or up to the horizontal position, whereas bells rung in a peal, like our church bells, are swung completely up or raised and set with the mouth upwards, when the ringers stop between the peals. No other nation in the world ring their bells in this way, but they only half raise them, and ring their chimes by the easier and less effective plan of tolling, wherein the bell swings just enough to make the clapper strike it. The only objection to our mode of ringing our bells, is not the hard work, as it is a most healthy exercise, but when the bells are very large and the tower is weak, either from decay if it is old or poverty of construction if it is modern, the horizontal thrust of the bells is too much for it to bear. Not that it

is not safe to ring the bells because the tower sways with them. Stone, like everything else, is elastic to a certain extent, and many a tower has gone on vibrating for centuries without being the worse for it.

The largest bell rung in a peal in England, and probably in the world, is the tenor in the peal at Exeter, which weighs 67 cwt. The peal of bells at the Exeter Cathedral is the largest peal of bells in England, and they are, of course, very old. There are ten bells in the peal, and though the earliest date for recasting the bells appears in the chapter book dated September 28th, 1689, the tenor bell B bears the name of Grandison inscribed upon it, and as Grandison was Bishop of Exeter from 1327 to 1369, it is most probable the bell was put up about this time, and inscribed with his name, as it was the ancient custom to name the bells either in honor of some saint or the donor of the bell.

The ninth bell in the Exeter peal is named "Stafford." The eighth bell, called the "old nine o'clock," was probably the Curfew bell rung in olden times at eight or nine in the evening. The seventh bell bears the name of "Cobthorne," and the sixth bell is called the "Doom bell." Though I have not been able to discover the exact origin of the name, it was probably rung at the time of executions. There is an order in the chapter book for recasting it, dated 1693. The fifth is inscribed "Fox," who was Bishop of Exeter from 1487 to 1491; and who is said to have given the Cathedral the curious clock and the great Peter bell which is in the North tower. The "Keble" bell has the date of 1729, when it was recast. And the second and third bells bear the dates of 1616 and 1658.

The best small peal of bells in England is said to be at Castle Camps in Cambridgeshire. Denison tells us that no good peal of eight bells, or even a single good bell of thirty hundred weight, has been cast within the last thirty years; and the art of casting very large bells, say of four tons or six feet in diameter, had perished long before that. There has been no good bell of that size cast within the last century and a half at least. That of St. Paul's, which had to be cast twice over and was made in 1709, though better than any of the later ones, is not generally considered a really good bell; for though the art of bell-founding survived the other gothic arts for several centuries, it has of late sunk very low.

The tone of a bell depends conjointly on the diameter, the height, and the thickness, the smaller bell yielding the lower note, other things being equal. The shape of bells is different in different countries, being more cylindrical or conical in one than another; and having evidently originated in cymbals or basins, it is probable that from remote ages to the present time there may have been a gradual progression from a flat circular plate to a figure nearly approaching a cylinder.

Denison says: "The foreign bells are not superior to the English, and that long-waisted bells, like the French, of rather a flower-pot form, are inferior to those whose internal height is not more than a quarter of their diameter, and more contracted in the waist. The tone or note of a bell can be altered by cutting, whereas the tone or quality of the sound is incurable if it is bad. Bells are made of different substances, which produce a difference in the sound.

Glass is one of the most sonorous bodies of

which bells are constructed, but we have heard of wooden bells in the East, although throughout Europe they are made of a compound of copper and tin, called bell-metal, to which silver is said to have been occasionally added. This, as I have already said, Mr. Denison declares to have been a vulgar error, though many still believe the old superstition. Modern bell-founders say that the composition of bell-metal ought to be four parts of copper to one of tin. Enormous furnaces are necessary for the casting of church bells, as the whole casting must be made at once; but a description of this is too long a subject for me to enter upon. The casting of a bell is most beautifully described in Schiller's "Das Lied von der Glocke."

The largest peal of six bells is at Sherborne, where the bells are very old and famous, and they are nearly the same size and weight as the Bow bells, of which the tenor weighs 53 cwt., and the sixth above it 2 cwt. Two more bells were added to the peal at Sherborne in 1858, so that they have now a peal of eight bells, as well as the Sanctus bell, which bears the usual inscription, "Ave Maria, ora pro nobis;" and the Fire bell, on which are inscribed the words,—

"Lord, quench this furious flame,
Arise, run, help, put out the same."

It is rung by the sexton on the first alarm of a fire.

The tenor bell at Sherborne was the gift of Cardinal Wolsey, who at one time was rector of Limington, near Ilchester. This bell was the smallest of the seven bells imported from Tournay, and distributed by him among the cathedrals of Lincoln, Exeter, Oxford, &c. It is called Gr. at Tom, after its donor, and has the following legend attached to it:—

"By Wolsey's gift I measure time for all;
To mirth, to grief, to church, I serve to call."

It was re-cast in Elizabeth's time, but has now fallen out of repair.

The seventh bell at Sherborne is called the Lady's Bell.

Most of the old bells in England have some legend or inscription belonging to them. In a tower at St. Peter's, at Rome, are five bells, most of which are inscribed with Latin verses explanatory of some historical facts—one was hung in 1258, during the ministry of a certain person; another was cast in 1358, after the lightning had destroyed the former bells. In the church of the Jesuits, at Rome, there was a bell brought from England, which was inscribed:—

"Facta fuit A Dom 1400 die. vi. mensis
Septembris Sancta Barbara ora pro nobis."

On two old bells in England are also these Latin inscriptions:—

"Hec campana Margareta est nominata."

And on the other bell in the same place are these words:—

"In multis annis resonet campana Johannis."

On the tenor bell of the parish church of Abbot's Leigh, in Somersetshire, are the words:—

"I to the church the living call,
And to the grave doth summon all."

And on the treble bell:—

"My treble voice makes hearts rejoice."

1714 is the date of the oldest of these bells. In another parish in Somersetshire is a bell of the date of 1705, with the inscription as follows:—

"Thoft my voia, it is bot small,
Will be herd amongst you all."

At the Church of St. Sidwell, Exeter, several of the bells have curious inscriptions:—

1st Bell,— "I mean to make it understood,
That though I'm little yet I'm good." 1773.

2d Bell,— "If you have a judicious ear,
You'll own my voice is sweet and clear." 1773.

3d Bell,— "Such wondrous power to musick given,
It elevates the soul to heaven."

4th Bell,— "Ye people, all that hear me ring,
Be faithful to your God and king." 1773.

5th Bell,— "While thus we join in cheerful sounds,
May love and loyalty abound."

6th Bell,— "Ye ringers all that prize your health, and
happiness,
Be sober, merry, wise, and you'll the same
possess." 1773.

7th Bell,— "All ye who join in wedlock's bands
Your hands and hearts unite,
So shall our tuneful tongues unite
To laud the nuptial rite."

A bell was presented by King Edward III. of England to St. Stephen's Chapel, which, according to the inscription upon it, was 33,000 weight. The largest bell in all France is said to be the one hung in St. Mary's Church at Rouen, and it has this inscription:—

"Je suis nommée George d'Amboise,
Qui plus que trente six milpoise,
Et si qui bien me poysera,
Quarante mil y trouvera."

This bell was presented to the church by George, Archbishop of Rouen, and the tower containing it was equally famous. A great scarcity of oil prevailed in the diocese, so that there was hardly enough for Lent, and the archbishop permitted the inhabitants to use butter on each paying sixpence for the indulgence. From the sum then collected the tower was built, and always thereafter was called the *Tour de la Buerre*.

Many and various are the legends of the foreign bells, none can surpass the noble old English peals in their richness of sound and the depth of their notes, and around them how many ties and associations are twined! And if the old tenor of the Exeter peal could raise its voice, how many sad and bright stories would mingle in its song!

MUSIC AND DRAMA IN VIENNA.

The present manager of the Imperial Operahouse reminds me of the individual whom Charles Coleman the Younger, in his poem entitled *My Nightgown and Slippers*, describes as resembling:

"Three single gentlemen roll'd into one."

I do not mean to assert that the successor of Signor Salvi is much fatter, or even at all fatter, than the generality of Germans. It is not his corporal rotundity which makes me compare him to Coleman's hero, but the fact of his being designated in conversation and print by three different titles. On one occasion he will be called Herr von Dingelstedt; the next time he is mentioned, it is as Hofrath Dingelstedt; while, when you hear or read of him again, he figures as Dr. Dingelstedt. I myself have always given him the last title, and, therefore, shall continue to do so. Now, *apropos* of Dr. Dingelstedt. I told you in former letters that in Vienna, just as elsewhere, there are plenty of persons very fond of croaking upon every possible subject. These amiable individuals could not, of course, let so fine a subject as the new management of the Operahouse escape them. They shook their heads dolefully when they referred to it, and hinted mysteriously to everyone who would listen to them that the authorities had made a great mistake in appointing Dr. Dingelstedt as Sig. Salvi's successor. In the first place, they said that no non-musical man ought ever to be at the head of an operatic establishment,

and then—entirely ruining the value of the rule they had laid down by immediately modifying it—that if any exceptionally gifted non-musical man *ought* to be appointed, Dr. Dingelstedt was not that man. At the outset, they found a goodly number of proselytes to their own views, but things are changed considerably at present, and the great mass of opera-goers openly express their satisfaction with the new management. They have reason to do so, for Doctor Dingelstedt has infused new life into the Operahouse. He is very active, but with activity combines judgment. He introduces plenty of reforms, it is true, but then plenty of reforms are needed. Among the various departments of the establishment which have been, or are in the course of being, completely remodelled, I may mention the chorus. When you are about to engage a housemaid, it is satisfactory to know that she has been some time, say two or three years, in her last situation, because the fact implies that her former employers were satisfied with her. But even a housemaid may have remained with one mistress too long. Few ladies would like to take into their service a candidate who could bring a thirty years' character, because they would infer, and justly, that in so long a period the applicant must have become somewhat older than she was at the commencement of it, and that her capabilities for running up and down stairs, waiting at table, and making the beds, must have deteriorated proportionally. Now the same argument that holds good for housemaids, applies equally well, if not better, to chorus singers, and when a chorus singer has chorused for twenty years, it is high time he should chorus no more. So Dr. Dingelstedt thinks, and I do not suppose many of the readers of the *Musical World* will disagree with him. But the veteran chorus-singers of the Imperial Operahouse are of a very different opinion, and exclaim loudly and pertinaciously against the injustice, not to say cruelty of a measure that shuts against them a stage-door which many of them have opened and shut for little less than a quarter of century—which drives them from a stage whose boards they trod when this reckless innovator, this operatic iconoclast, was a mere boy. The ladies affected by the measure are especially wroth, and if harsh names were prejudicial to a man's health, not all the doctors in Vienna could save Dr. Dingelstedt from a speedy death. But Dr. Dingelstedt is not a man to be stopped so easily; he is not to be frightened by that time-honored scarecrow-cry of "vested rights," and so he has engaged a new chorus, the members of which have been, for some time past, undergoing a strict course of training, and will shortly replace their venerable but highly inefficient predecessors.

Herr Richard Wagner's *Fliegender Holländer* has been revived. The principal parts were sustained by Herren Beck, Meyerhofer, Walter and Madame Dustmann. The lady sang the music allotted to her exceedingly well, but her personal appearance must have been strangely opposed to the image the author composer had in his mind of the entrancing and youthful Senta, whose girlish beauty exercises so irresistible a power of fascination on the mysterious "Holländer," whom, by the way, Herr Beck represented admirably, as he did, also, the part of the hero of *Wilhelm Tell* a few nights afterwards, when Mlle. Rabatinsky greatly distinguished herself as Mathilde, and Mlle.